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April 1, 2003

Via: Federal Express

Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
104 Hart Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Via: Federal Express

Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
433 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Hatch and Leahy:

I write this letter to urge approval of Judge Charles W. Pickering, Sr.'s nomination to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

I first met Judge Pickering in 1990 in my capacity as a member of the ABA's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary. As the Fifth Circuit's representative on the Committee, I conducted the primary investigation into his professional qualifications when he was nominated to a federal district judgeship in Mississippi. I spent many hours discussing his qualifications with judges, lawyers and lay people throughout the state. I also interviewed Judge Pickering, during which we touched on matters relevant to his qualifications to serve as a federal judge.

The Charles W. Pickering that I have read about in press reports during the pendency of his current nomination does not comport with the Charles W. Pickering that I have come to know in the last thirteen years. Competent, compassionate, sensitive and free from bias are terms that aptly

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describe him. Throughout his professional career as a lawyer and as a judge, Judge Pickering has tried to do what he thought was right, consistent with his oaths as an officer of the court and as a judge. Attempts to demonize him are both unfair and out of place in a judicial confirmation proceeding.

On a more personal note, I still remember the words of encouragement I received from Judge Pickering while my own nomination to the Fifth Circuit was pending before the Judiciary Committee. On one occasion, Judge Pickering called me and graciously offered to contact Senator Lott's office to see if anything could be done to secure a hearing for my nomination. The word came back that Senator Lott was willing to help, but the process could not go forward until my home state senators returned their blue slips. That never happened. To this day, I very much appreciate the fact that Judge Pickering reached out to me and offered to help at a time when my pleas for a hearing had fallen on deaf ears.

The current impasse in the confirmation proceedings is an unfortunate one, because it continues to ensnare many nominees of goodwill who have answered the call to serve. For their sake and for the ongoing vitality of our federal judiciary, I would hope that you and your colleagues can find common ground. A good starting point would be the confirmation of Judge Pickering.

Thank you.

Yours truly,



Jorge C. Rangel